Non-Furnishing of Utilisation Certificates

4660. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India had mentioned in its report No. 1 of 97 on page 22 that some departments have not furnished utilisation certificate since last twenty years; and

(b) if so, what actions have been taken in this regard, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It is primarily the responsibility of concerned Departments/ Ministries to watch receipt of utilisation certificates from Grants-in-aid institutions. However, Ministry of Finance have directed the Departments/Ministries to ensure that fresh grants are not released unless utilisation certificates in respect of earlier grants have been obtained.

Rationalisation of Punishment for Smuggling and Drug Trafficking

4661. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to rationalise the punishment structure for smuggling and trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic substances; and

(b) if so, what are the new stipulations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Bill, namely, the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Amendment) Bill, 1998 has been introduced in Rajya Sabha on 9.7.98 for amending the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. The Bill, *inter-alia*, proposes to rationalise the sentence structure to ensure that while drug traffickers who traffic in significant quantities of drugs are punished with deterrent sentences, the addicts and those who commit less serious offences are sentenced to less severe punishment. The Bill also proposes to restrict the application of strict bail provisions to those offenders who indulge in

serious offences. It also seeks to abolish mandatory death sentence in respect of certain offences. It also seeks to mention certain situations whose presence should make any offence more serious for imposing higher punishment than the minimum punishment.

Automation of Banks in Maharashtra

4662. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that lack of automation is costing Nationalised Banks substantial loss of income in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the details of estimated loss of business, bank-wise;

(c) the details of fresh initiatives taken/proposed to be taken to provide technology solution to the Nationalised Banks connecting chain of their branches for cost effective and efficient operations; and

(d) the details of phased programme worked out bank-wise for the next five years in Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) to (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Central Excise on Plastic Products

4663. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that while household goods made of stainless steel and aluminium and cutlery and glass-tableware are exempt from Central Excise, the corresponding household plastic products are subject to Central Excise;

(b) if so, whether Government are aware that it is the comparatively weaker sections of the society who largely have to restore to plastic ware; and

(c) whether Government have received representations in this regard from plastic industry; if so, the details thereof and the Government's decision thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR): (a) There is no excise duty